



ACTE Legislative Alert: House approves Perkins bill

May 04, 05 – With overwhelming bipartisanship, the House of Representatives voted 416-9 to approve H.R. 366 (the Vocational and Technical Education for the Future Act) – which continues the process of renewing the federal law governing career and technical education (CTE). Despite the Bush Administration's call to bring the Carl D. Perkins Act to an end, legislators from both sides of the aisle lined up to express support for the legislation. Expressing his support for H.R. 366 during a debate on the House floor on May 3, Rep. John Peterson (R- Penn.) said that the bill was good for career education and the country's economic prosperity.

"Let's hope that this is the beginning of technology education being valued in this country," said Rep. Peterson.

As passed, H.R. 366 supports increased accountability and a stronger focus on academic outcomes. To strengthen accountability, states would be required to make "continuous and substantial" improvement in both the academic and technical skills achievement of students. The bill requires local communities receiving Perkins funding to establish performance indicators and improvement plans, and states would be required to annually evaluate local programs against set performance levels.

The bill aligns student academic standards with No Child Left Behind, and fosters math and science education that incorporates the use of technology. The bill also seeks to strengthen student transitions from secondary to postsecondary education, and requires that states use funds to link programming and support partnerships between secondary and postsecondary institutions. To enhance these efforts, the bill would require states to develop sequences of courses for CTE programming that incorporate both secondary and postsecondary elements, and include challenging academic and CTE content that lead to a degree or other credential. Three amendments to H.R. 366 were passed: one to clarify the Tech Prep hold harmless provision, another to add language to permissible state leadership activities to support the transition of sub-baccalaureate CTE students into baccalaureate degree programs, and a third to add language to permissible local activities on training automotive technicians in alternative energy technologies.

The House action comes after the full Senate passed its version of the bill, S. 250 (the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2005), by a vote of 99-0 on March 10. Christin Driscoll, ACTE's senior director of public policy, expressed support for H.R. 366.

"While we have concerns with a few provisions in the House bill, the bulk of the bill maintains current law and contains important improvements to the Perkins program," Driscoll said. "We look forward to a positive conference between the two bills where we can address outstanding issues." ACTE remains concerned about provisions in H.R. 366, including the elimination of a separate funding stream for Tech Prep and a cut to state administrative funds.

ACTE's Executive Director Janet Bray expressed concern that the federal budget passed by Congress last week, which imposes tight caps on domestic discretionary spending, could mean cuts to education programs.

"Cuts to or the elimination of the Perkins program would force already cash strapped schools, training programs, and community colleges to reduce or eliminate programs that are working in communities across the country successfully to preparing students for careers in the 21st century," Bray said.

A number of legislators expressed disappointment about H.R. 366's merging of the Tech Prep into the basic state grant funding stream. Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-Calif.), ranking member of the House Education Committee's Subcommittee on Education Reform, said she did not think that merging Tech Prep was good policy.

"As we all know, not sending Tech Prep separately to the states will eventually cause states to lose focus," she said. Woolsey added that she hoped this matter would be favorably resolved in conference. Rep. John Boehner (R-Ohio), chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, said that Tech Prep was merged into the basic state grant because students in CTE programs also need a strong academic foundation, and the program was duplicating what H.R. 366 seeks to do overall: integrate technical education with academics.

Aspects of the bill that were most lauded by legislators include its emphasis on academics, and the strengthening of programs and accountability. However, Rep. Woolsey was not alone in expressing concern that while the bill seeks to strengthen accountability for CTE programs, it cuts 60 percent of the funds for states to administer that accountability. For more information about H.R. 366's passage, visit

www.acteonline.org/members/news/legislative_news/legalert_050405.cfm.